

Voices of Baltimore:

*Jerome has sustained recovery for five years and is a facilities manager with New Pathways.<sup>1</sup>*

**Was there a time when you hit rock bottom?**

It's around 10:30 at night, man, and I feel like I'm the only person outside—I ain't got nowhere to go—and I look at the row houses and I see the bedroom lights on and I see the TV lights on the curtains, and I was like, damn, I wish I had somewhere to go.... I got to thinking, you know, this lifestyle costing me—I'm forty years old—I don't want to still be out here and wind up like these old addicts, my legs not working right, on a cane, drinking wine, scraping up two dollars...

**How did you get off of drugs?**

I ran into a young lady...she said she had gotten clean through Gaudenzia. She said the meals were prepared real well, and it was clean and safe. She said they would detox you, and I didn't want to be sick no more. The main thing was I was tired, frustrated and I had enough. You know, I had been court-ordered to go to treatment centers before – never done it. But when I hit bottom and went and walked into the center myself, it made a difference. The best thing about Gaudenzia, I was looking at guys that had been through the same thing I did.

**Was there anyone there that had a particular effect on you?**

It was like a network, it was all geared to help one another. They was talking and I was listening... Gaudenzia became my safe haven, 'cause don't forget I was still homeless... But pretty soon, Harbor City was my second safe haven, with a job... Then I started to get more responsibility to recruit guys from Gaudenzia.

**How did that feel, to be able to help others who were in recovery?**

Not bragging or anything, but yeah, helping them was a good feeling. At first, my job was just to get the guys there, sign 'em up and drive to the site. But soon this job was my livelihood, and I depended on it to pay my bills. I went to work, I paid attention, and I did what I was supposed to do.

**What are you doing nowadays?**

I work for New Pathways...and my job is to make sure that [the kids' apartments] are furnished and everything is in there that the kids need. Now, I'm like a big brother to these kids. I feel like I've been put there for a reason. 'Cause I've been through a lot of these things they're about to go through. And I've helped kids who was getting off course to change their minds.

**Are you in touch with your own kids?**

---

<sup>1</sup> New Pathways prepares youth emerging from foster care systems to become empowered, educated, and economically independent adults.

Oh, yeah...now I help my daughter, she's 18, she graduated from high school, and I was a part of that. My son is 15, I'm a part of that...Here's the best thing, me and the kids' mother, we're legally divorced, but she's one of my best friends. I'm a thankful recovering addict.... You know, we all got the same problems. The thing is what you gonna do about it?

**What do you think of the idea of people in recovery helping each other?**

I think it's a great idea. You know, thanks to someone who took the time to stop and say something to me...I've got my life back.